

Empire. Their loss is our loss, their courage a testament to mankind's indomitable spirit.

It is this spirit that kept the hope of Armenians alive through the centuries of persecution. It is this spirit that lives today in the hearts of all Armenians, in their church, in their language, in their culture. And it is this spirit that underpins the remarkable resilience and courage of Armenians around the world. The Armenian-American community, now nearly one million strong, has made enormous contributions to America. Now, with the emergence of an independent Armenia, the Armenian people are bringing the same determination to building democracy and a modern economy in their native land.

Even as we commemorate the past—which we must never forget—we commit ourselves today to Armenia's future as an independent and prosperous nation, at peace with its neighbors and with close ties to the West. That is why the United States has provided more than \$445 million in assistance to alleviate humanitarian needs and support democratic and economic reform. I will do everything in my power to preserve assistance levels for Armenia.

I continue to be deeply concerned about the conflict in the region surrounding Armenia. The terrible effects of this war have been felt throughout the Caucasus: tens of thousands have died, more than a million have been displaced, economies have been shattered, and security threatened. The United States is committed to working with the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to encourage Armenia and Azerbaijan to move beyond their

cease-fire to a lasting political settlement. I plan to nominate a Special Negotiator for Nagorno-Karabakh at the rank of Ambassador to advance those negotiations. And I pledge United States support of OSCE efforts to back that settlement with a peacekeeping force.

The U.S. also seeks to encourage the regional cooperation that will build prosperity and reinforce peace. I commend the recent decision of the Government of Turkey to open air corridors to Armenia, which will make assistance delivery faster, cheaper, and more reliable. We had urged that it do so and hope this is a first step toward lifting other blockades in the region, initially for humanitarian deliveries and then overall. Open borders would help create the conditions needed for economic recovery and development, including construction of a Caspian oil pipeline through the Caucasus to Turkey, which is a key to long-term prosperity in the region.

The administration's efforts, assistance in support of reform, reinforced efforts toward peace settlement, building broad regional cooperation and encouraging the development of a Caspian oil pipeline through the Caucasus to Turkey, represent the key building blocks of U.S. policy to support the development of an independent and prosperous Armenia.

On this 80th anniversary of the Armenian massacres, I call upon all people to work to prevent future acts of such inhumanity. And as we remember the past, let us also rededicate ourselves to building a democratic Armenia of prosperity and lasting peace.

Remarks to the American Association of Community Colleges in Minneapolis, Minnesota

April 24, 1995

Thank you very much. Secretary Riley, thank you for your introduction. If I were you, I would go bowling. *[Laughter]* We're going to save your job. *[Laughter]* Thank you, Secretary Reich, for your enthusiasm, for being enthusiastic about the right things. In your heart alone you have enough domestic content to be the Secretary of Labor. Thank you, Jacquelyn Belcher and David Pierce. I also want to say how very glad

I am to be joined here by the distinguished United States Senator from Minnesota, Senator Paul Wellstone, and his wife, Sheila, who's here; two of our colleagues in the House of Representatives, Congressman Bruce Vento and Congressman Bill Luther, also back there. Thank you for being here.

I want to say a special word of congratulations to the 20 students who were named to the 1995

All-USA Academic Team. I want to thank those who are watching us via satellite. And I also want to say a special word about some fine students and advocates I met just before I came in here. I met two students who have benefited from our direct loan program—I'll talk more about them in a moment; two students who are critically interested in public assistance to education, because without that they would not have been able to go to school; and I met a gentleman who is devoting his time to organizing people against the attempt in Washington to start charging interest on student loans while students are still in college. Sandra Tinsley, Jessica Aviles, Jeffrey Lanes, Robbie Dalton-Kirtley, who is also one of the academic team all-Americans, and Dave Dahlgren, I thank all of them for meeting with me, and they're here somewhere. If they are, they ought to wave or stand up—there's Jeffrey. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Before I begin today to talk about education and training, I'd like to say just a word or two if I might, before this audience of educators and people who believe in and appreciate the value of free speech, about where we are in the aftermath of the Oklahoma bombing and what we are going to do about the kind of America our children will inherit.

Yesterday Hillary and I joined tens of thousands of people in Oklahoma City, and of course millions of you all across the country, to witness the end result of abject hatred. I was there, as President, to represent all of you in the mourning. But also I felt that we were there, Hillary and I, as ordinary American citizens as well, as husband and wife, as parents, as neighbors of those people.

No words can do justice to how moving it was to be there yesterday. No words can do justice to the courage of those who worked in the rescue operation around the clock. And one person has already given her life in that endeavor. No words can do justice to the small acts of kindness and generosity, all the people in Oklahoma who won't take money at the gas station or the local coffee shop or the barber shop or even at the airline ticket terminal for people who are there working to try to help them put their lives together.

But I will never forget, more than anything else, the faces and the stories of the family members of the victims. I was walking through the room shaking hands with them, and I saw

a lady with her children who had been in the Oval Office just a few weeks ago as her husband left my Secret Service detail to go to what seemed to be a less hectic pace of duty in Oklahoma City. I saw the children of a man who was a football hero at the University of Arkansas when so many people who are now on the White House staff were friends of his. The young Air Force sergeant took out two pictures his wife had taken of me just 3 weeks ago when I visited our troops in Haiti. And she was one of those troops, but she came home because we wound down our mission there. And she married her fiancé, and 3 days later she went to the Federal building to change her name. And so he had to give me the pictures his wife took. I saw three children, teenage children, with a woman and another child taking care of them. One of them had one of my Inaugural buttons on. Their mother died last year of an illness. Their father went to our Inaugural, and they asked me to sign the pin to their father who is still missing—three teenagers losing both parents.

I could go on and on and on. I say to all of you, first we must complete the rescue effort and the recovery effort. Of course, we must help that community rebuild. We must arrest, convict, and punish the people who committed this terrible, terrible deed, but our responsibility does not end there.

In this country we cherish and guard the right of free speech. We know we love it when we put up with people saying things we absolutely deplore. And we must always be willing to defend their right to say things we deplore to the ultimate degree. But we hear so many loud and angry voices in America today whose sole goal seems to be to try to keep some people as paranoid as possible and the rest of us all torn up and upset with each other. They spread hate. They leave the impression that, by their very words, that violence is acceptable. You ought to see—I'm sure you are now seeing the reports of some things that are regularly said over the airwaves in America today.

Well, people like that who want to share our freedoms must know that their bitter words can have consequences and that freedom has endured in this country for more than two centuries because it was coupled with an enormous sense of responsibility on the part of the American people.

If we are to have freedom to speak, freedom to assemble, and, yes, the freedom to bear arms, we must have responsibility as well. And to those of us who do not agree with the purveyors of hatred and division, with the promoters of paranoia, I remind you that we have freedom of speech, too, and we have responsibilities, too. And some of us have not discharged our responsibilities. It is time we all stood up and spoke against that kind of reckless speech and behavior.

If they insist on being irresponsible with our common liberties, then we must be all the more responsible with our liberties. When they talk of hatred, we must stand against them. When they talk of violence, we must stand against them. When they say things that are irresponsible, that may have egregious consequences, we must call them on it. The exercise of their freedom of speech makes our silence all the more unforgivable. So exercise yours, my fellow Americans. Our country, our future, our way of life is at stake. I never want to look into the faces of another set of family members like I saw yesterday, and you can help to stop it.

Our democracy has endured a lot over these last 200 years, and we are strong enough today to sort out and work through all these angry voices. But we owe it to our children to do our part. Billy Graham got a standing ovation yesterday when he said, "The spirit of our Nation will not be defeated." I can tell by your response that that is true. But you must begin today.

The little girl who read the poem yesterday at our service said, "Remember the trust of the children. Darkness will not have its day." The trust of the children is what we are here to talk about.

This whole community college movement has made as big a contribution to the future of America as any institutional change in the United States in decades. All of you live every day with the future. You have important work to do. I ask you only to think of how different what you do is from what you have been hearing from the voices of division.

Why do community colleges work? Well, first of all, they're not encumbered by old-fashioned bureaucracies. By and large, they are highly entrepreneurial. They are highly flexible. They are really democratic—small "d"—they're open to everybody, right?—in the best sense. They are open to everybody. And people work together.

And when something doesn't work, they go do something else. That's what you do. You do it in a spirit of cooperation. You are remarkably unpolitical in that sense.

In other words, every experience you have—and you see people of all ages coming through your doors, walking out your doors, going on to better, more fulfilling, more satisfying lives, able to help themselves and strengthen America in the process. It is the direct antithesis of the kind of paranoia and division and hatred that we hear spewed out at us all over this country, day-in and day-out, by people exercising their free speech to make the rest of us miserable. And it contradicts the experience of what works in America.

So today that is why I have asked you to do this. I also want to talk to you a little bit about what I hope we can do in education. You want Americans to be more hopeful, you want this to be a more positive place, you want people to be rewarded for their labors—strengthen education in America. Build the community colleges; open the doors to all. That's the way to build the future of this country, not by dividing us and bringing us down but by uniting us, building us up, and pointing us toward the future.

You know, I have seen the faces of America's future. I met a 46-year-old former welfare mother at San Bernardino Community College, full of enthusiasm and hope for the future. I met a 73-year-old Holocaust survivor in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, who built a successful business and is now committed to investing in the education and training of his employees using his local educational institution. I met a 52-year-old woman at Galesburg Community College in Illinois, laid off from a factory job after 20 years but building a better future.

Today I met some impressive people. I met this fine young man down here, Jeffrey Lanes, who had an injury but didn't let it defeat him. Instead, he went back to school with the help of public assistance to make a new and better life for himself. But we are better off that he is going to have a better life. He is giving us a better America, and we thank him for it. And we ought to support opportunities for other people just like him.

I mentioned her before, but when I met Robbie Dalton-Kirtley, who's part of the All-USA Academic Team—she's one of these non-traditional students. She waited until her young-

est child was in kindergarten, and she went back to school. She's from Flat Rock, North Carolina. But she is building a future that will strengthen not only Flat Rock, North Carolina, and her family but all the rest of us as well. So I thank you for what you are doing. And I ask you how we can do more of it, and what should we be doing in Government?

Well, when I ran for President, I ran with a heavy bias toward education. I look out on this crowd today, and I see a lot of people from our community colleges in Arkansas. I'm proud of the fact that when I was Governor we built more of them, we helped to strengthen the ones that were there, we helped some of the vocational schools to either convert or merge or to become more like, by diversifying their curriculum, the community colleges.

In fact, I was looking at a couple of people out there; I was at their places so often they probably wanted me to leave so they could get some work done when I was a Governor. [Laughter]

I ran for President in large measure because I felt that the work of America that was being done out in the grassroots, the work of creating opportunity and demanding responsibility and rewarding it, was not being done in Washington, that we were increasing our Government's debt at a rapid rate and unbelievably reducing our investment in our future. I believed then and I believe more strongly now that this country has two deficits. We've got a budget deficit, but we've got an education deficit as well. And we have to cure them both.

We are still living with the legacy of the explosive debts of the last 12 years. The budget cuts we have made already and the taxes we have asked the top one and a half percent of our people to pay—listen to this—would balance the budget to today. Today we would have a balanced budget except for the interest we owe on the debt run up between 1981 and the end of 1992. So we are bringing the deficit down. We are committed to that, but we have to remember we have more than one deficit.

You heard the Secretary of Labor talking about this, but I have been obsessed since the late 1980's with the increasing inequality in America. You know, when I was born at the end of World War II, I grew up in the American dream. And the great domestic crisis we had was a civil rights crisis. And we thought if we could just get over racial prejudice, that our

economy was so strong, our society was so powerful, that the American dream could just be opened up for everyone.

And from the end of the Second World War until the late seventies, that is pretty much what happened. All income groups increased together. And in fact, the poorest 20 percent of our people did slightly better than the rest of us in terms of where they started. We were growing together and going forward.

Today, we are going forward. Our economy has produced over 6 million new jobs. You heard what the Secretary of Labor said: We had the lowest combined rate of unemployment and inflation in 25 years, but we are not growing together. And that is why so many Americans say they do not feel more secure, even though we're having an economic recovery. They say, "Yeah, I read that in the papers, but it's not affecting my life. I haven't gotten a raise."

Sixty percent of our people are living on the same or lower wages than they were making 10 years ago, working a longer work week. Why? Because of the combined impact of the global economy, the technology revolution, the lack of a Government response to it. In fact, the Government response made it worse.

The minimum wage next year—if we don't raise it this year—the minimum wage next year will be at its lowest level in 40 years. That is not my idea of how to get to the 21st century. So we have these—[applause] Thank you.

So we basically are splitting apart economically. If you look at it, it is clear that the fault line is education. Earnings for high school drop-outs have dropped at a breath-taking rate in the last 15 years. Earnings for high school graduates have dropped at a less dramatic rate.

The only group for which earnings have increased steadily are earnings for people who have at least 2 years of post-high school education and training. You, you are at the fault line in America. The fault line of American society is education. Those who have it are doing well. Those who don't are paying. And the future offers more of the same at a faster rate.

Therefore, it is clear that our common mission, if we want to help people help themselves and strengthen this country, must be focused on a relentless determination to see that every American lives up to the fullest of his or her capacities. It is in our common interest.

So all these wonderful stories you can tell about your community colleges, all these touch-

ing individual triumphs, are also the story of America's rebirth at the dawn of the 21st century. Make no mistake about it, you are doing more than helping individual Americans live out their dreams; you are creating the system in which we can keep the American dream alive for our country and the American idea alive for all the world in the 21st century. If you succeed, we will. You must succeed, and the rest of us must make sure we do what we can to help you do it.

I want to make some brief points today about what we are trying to achieve in this Congress and what we are trying to stop from being achieved in this Congress. And I want to ask for your help.

In the last 2 years, we had broad bipartisan support for the most substantial increased effort by the National Government to support education in a generation: big increases in Head Start; world-class standards for our schools and more flexibility for our teachers, our parents, our administrations, and our students to meet them; school-to-work programs so our young people who don't go on to 4-year colleges would have the opportunity to move into the workplace with the kind of training and skills that would give them jobs that would raise their incomes, not drive them down; tech-prep programs as a part of school to work. A lot of you are involved in the tech-prep issue, and it's something I know a lot about from my personal experience, enabling high school students to get work experience and to go straight to community colleges. We created AmeriCorps, our national service initiative. And more than 30 community colleges and this association are participating in AmeriCorps. We've got people doing everything from helping the elderly in Kentucky to tutoring kids in inner-city Chicago to helping with community policing in Rochester, New York, thanks to the community colleges. And I thank you very much for your endeavors.

Now, what should we do? Number one, do no harm. Don't undo what we just did. Number one, do no harm. Number two, yes, we need to reduce the deficit, but we should increase the Pell grant program as we have proposed, not reduce it, as some have proposed. Yes, we should cut the deficit, but one way to cut the deficit that is absolutely wrong is to start charging interest on student loans while the students are still in school.

There is an answer, you know, in education to the budget conundrum. Almost unbelievably, there is an answer. It is our direct student loan program. We want to make it available for anyone who wants to finance assistance to college.

The student loan program, the direct loan program, started when I became President because I wanted to find a way to cut the cost of college loans, to cut the unbelievable bureaucratic paperwork headache, and to give students more options about how to repay loans, because I began to see students in our State who were dropping out of college because they were terrified that they would never be able to repay their loans, especially students who were going to do things that were important to our society but didn't pay a lot, students who wanted to be teachers, students who wanted to be nurses, students who wanted to be police officers, students who wanted to serve the public and knew that they would have big loans and modest salaries to repay them with. So we began to look around for ways to do this. And we settled on, and the Congress adopted, the direct college loan program.

When I took office, everybody in the country was complaining about the way the student loan program worked. Students complained that they couldn't get loans or if they did it took them too long and it was an absolute nightmare to fool with the paperwork. Colleges complained that the paperwork was driving them crazy. And everybody was worried about the nature of the repayment terms and the fact that there weren't enough options. There was also, I might add, an unconscionable amount of loan default, people who would not pay their loans back, costing the taxpayers \$2.8 billion a year. And the banks didn't have much incentive to help, because they had a 90 percent guarantee. So by the time—if they brought some sort of action, they'd spend the 10 percent trying to collect the rest, so why not just take a check from the Government?

Well, the direct loan program addresses all those problems. It lowers costs for students. It allows borrowers to choose flexible repayment arrangements, including a pay-as-you-earn option. Therefore, it doesn't doom anyone to a crushing debt burden. It's also, believe it or not, helping us to save billions of dollars of taxpayers' money. That plus Secretary Riley's more vigilant enforcement of the loan program have cut your losses as taxpayers from \$2.8 bil-

lion a year to \$1 billion a year, a reduction of almost two-thirds.

But get this—what are we going to do now? In the first year, we had 104 schools with over 252,000 students in the program. In the second year, we'll have more than 1,400 schools, representing 37 percent of all loans, committed to enrolling. Today I am proud to announce that in our third year, beginning July 1996, 450 new schools will join the program, which will mean 45 percent of all student loans will be administered through this program.

Now, that's the good news. You don't have to take my word for it. You can look at the students that I just mentioned, Jessica Aviles or Sandra Tinsley, they're both here. Go ask them about it. Listen to them talk about how much quicker they got the loan and what a joy it was not to have to go through the hassle and the delay and the uncertainty.

But here's the good news. If we keep going until we make the student loan program available to all the schools on a voluntary basis, it will save the taxpayers \$12 billion over 5 years or about the same amount of money that would be saved if we started charging interest on student loans while the students are in college.

So if we want to reduce the deficit, let's reduce the deficit by increasing education, not by reducing it. That's the message that I want you to take out there.

The second thing I want to say to you is that we have a lot of Americans who are unemployed or underemployed who want more training and education. And a lot of them now only have access to certain highly specified and difficult-to-understand-and-access Government programs. There are dozens of Federal training programs, most of them enacted with the best of intention by Congress.

What we propose to do is to put the American people who need training in control of their own destiny with these programs, instead of just shifting the power from a Federal bureaucracy even to a State one. What we propose to do is to consolidate all these training programs and create a skill grant, essentially a training voucher to people who are unemployed or underemployed or qualified for Federal help, let them get the voucher and take it to their local community college and have access to the programs you offer for up to 2 years to get the training necessary for the future.

That is a much better expenditure of that money than to continue in these programs which may or may not be easily accessible and which require a whole lot of paperwork and are very confusing. We want to consolidate the money, give it directly to the people who are entitled to it in the form of a voucher, and let them take it to you to get the education you need. I hope you will help us pass that as well in this Congress.

Finally, let me talk about the tax cut issue. Everybody is for a tax cut. Who could be against it? Sounds great. But I would remind you that this is a serious issue, this deficit issue. We have worked very hard to reduce it by \$600 billion. When we brought the deficit down, that's what drove interest rates down in 1993. That's what gave us our economic recovery. That's what unleashed the engine of American enterprise. And the uncertainty that hangs now around whether we continue to show discipline in our budget is causing difficulties for our economy.

We cannot afford a \$200 billion tax cut and continue to reduce the deficit and meet our responsibilities to education and our future. We cannot afford to tilt most of the benefits of the tax cut to upper income people. They are doing very well in the economy as it is. They are doing very well. And this is not a statement of class warfare. I want to create more millionaires. I am proud of the fact that a lot of people have become millionaires since I have been President. But what will do that is a strong economy, a healthy economy in which everybody has the opportunity to succeed. That's what will create more successful entrepreneurs. If we have a system that grows the middle class and shrinks the under class and keeps this economy strong, the entrepreneurs will do well.

So what we should do is have a much smaller tax cut. It should be targeted sharply to people who need it, middle class people. And in my judgment it should be targeted to education. People should get a deduction for the cost of education after high school, because that will raise their incomes over the long run as well as over the short run. They will more than pay it back to the Treasury in future years because we will be accelerating the number and the intensity and the pace of those getting an education in America. That's the kind of tax cut we need: less, targeted to middle class, and focused like a laser beam on education. We need

an education tax cut. That's all we need for this country.

Let me close by asking you once again to make your voice heard in another way. The community colleges of America look like America. If you go to a board meeting of a community college and hear people talk about what programs they're going to have and what projects they're going to have and what partnerships they're going to create, chances are a hundred to one you can't tell whether there's a Republican or a Democrat talking at the board meeting.

Community colleges are open to people of all races and backgrounds and religious faiths and views. They bring people together. They are America at its best. We need more of that in Washington. So if you believe that we shouldn't start charging interest on the loans, especially since there's a better way to reduce the deficit; if you believe we should increase the Pell grants, not decrease them; if you believe we should keep expanding the direct loan program on a purely voluntary basis and see if our program is as good as I think it is and people keep using it; if you believe we should have this training voucher instead of this complicated welter of Federal programs; if you believe it's important to cure the education deficit and the budget deficit and therefore we should

focus on a tightly targeted education-related tax cut, then go back home and ask the students and the faculty members and the board members to sign petitions that you can send to your local Members of Congress and your Senators, without regard to party.

We dare not let education become a political partisan issue in America. It was not in the last 2 years; it should not be in 1995 and 1996. Every American has a vested interest in seeing that we all go forward in education. Every single, solitary bit of evidence shows us it is the fault line standing between us and a future in which the American dream is alive for everyone. If you want to reward hard work in America, that work must be smart work. Our future is on the line.

So I implore you, when you go home, make your voices heard. Say it is not a partisan issue, it is not a political issue, it is a question of keeping the American dream alive into the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:46 a.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the Minnesota Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Jacquelyn Belcher, chair, and David Pierce, president, American Association of Community Colleges.

Remarks on Departure From Minneapolis *April 24, 1995*

Thank you. I'm so glad to see you all. As you can see, I'm here with Senator and Mrs. Wellstone and Congressman Vento and Congressman Luther and Attorney General Humphrey. And I'm glad to be here with all of them, and I'm glad to be with you.

I also want to tell you, I'm glad I've got this big wind because I just had lunch downtown at a place called Peter's Grill, and I'm so full, I need a nap. *[Laughter]*

Let me thank you for coming out today and tell you that I have had a wonderful trip to Minnesota. I want to thank the people here at the airbase for making me feel welcome, as they always do, and the Air Force reservists for their service. And I want to thank the young

AmeriCorps members who are here today for their service.

The men and women here at this Air Reserve unit have gone all across the globe to preserve our freedom and to fight for the freedom of others. They served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. They delivered food and supplies to people in Bosnia to help them survive. That's the longest airlift in history, thanks to the United States Armed Forces and the people here. And people here have even helped to fight the fires in California. We're grateful to all of them for all those services.

I want to say something about the AmeriCorps volunteers here. In Minnesota alone, in this first year for AmeriCorps, they're